DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 829 SP 030 171

AUTHOR Ansah, S. L.
TITLE Recruiting Black Teachers: An Agenda for Black Colleges and Universities.
PUB DATE Mar 88
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Division G, Southeastern Regional Conference of the American Educational Research Association (Nashville, TN, March 3-5, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Colleges; *Black Teachers; *College School Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Public Schools; Socioeconomic Influences; Standardized Tests; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Shortage; *Test Wiseness

ABSTRACT

This paper, using available statistics, has sought to emphasize the declining number of black teachers in U.S. public school system, even though the enrollment is becoming predominantly black. The paper places the responsibility of arresting this downward trend on the predominantly black colleges and universities, and suggests three strategies to deal with the problem. These strategies include improving faculty teaching methods through professional development programs, teaching students to be test-wise, and establishing coalitions of partnerships with area schools and junior colleges. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED293829

RECRUITING BLACK TEACHERS: An Agenda for Black Colleges and Universities

By S . L . Ansah
Mississippi Valley State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. L. Ansah

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

A Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association, Division G, Southeastern Regional Conference, March 3-5, 1988
Nashville, Tennessee

SP030171

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RECRUITING BLACK TEACHERS: An Agenda for Black Colleges and Universities

By S.L. Ansah, Mississippi Valley State University, Itta Bena,Ms.

The concern for educational reform over the past several years makes it imperative that higher education institutions everywhere, and departments, colleges, and schools of education, especially, should be doubly concerned with studying options for improving the products that they turn out.

Both the Holmes' Report, **Tomorrow's Teachers** and the Carnegie's Report, **A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century**, emphasize the central role of teachers in any effort to improve schooling in the U.S. The two reports also indicate an impending shortage of teachers during the coming decade.

The indications are that though the shortages will be nation wide, they will be very much more felt among minority groups, especially, among blacks whose numbers in the teaching work force are fast declining. It is therefore imperative that predominantly black colleges and universities develop strategies to replenish this drying pool of black teachers for the sake of posterity.

The Declining Ratio of Black Teachers

The prognosis is that the black teacher is fast becoming a dying breed. The question is, why ? The explanation for this is not simple. However, limiting ourselves to the southern states only, we note a number of significant things. These southern states, including Mississippi, have led the way in instituting examinations that prospective teachers must pass in order to get certified. According to Graham (1987), white students are passing these exams at a rate ranging from 62% to 90%, while blacks are

passing at rates ranging from 10% to 70%. For example, the passing rate for whites, in Louisiana, is 78% but for blacks in that state, it is 15%. Similarly, in Georgia, the passing rate of whites is 87% while blacks rate 34%. Even among experienced teachers, as exemplified by the Texas case, 99% of white teachers compared with 82% of black teachers passed the recent teachers' examination (Rodman, 1986).

Why this disparity in the passing rates on these examinations? The socio-economic variable is very significant here. These southern states have large concentrations of poor families (largely minority families). A case in point is the Delta region of the state of Mississippi where the per capita income is still below poverty level. Added to the fact that children from poor racial minority homes tend to perform poorly on such tests, there is also a history of gross disparity in expenditure for educating these minorities over the years. For example, beteewn 1952-53, in Mississippi, the per pupil expenditure for blacks was $46.23, while the state spent $154.25 per pupil for whites, even though the national average at the time was $235.48. During the same period the library expenditure for each white student was 85 cents, but the state spent only 11 cents for each black student. A similar trend is also evident in Georgia where the per pupil value of school property was $300.37 for whites but only $38.63 for blacks.

Even in the 80s we see the same trend in the funding of post-secondary education in Mississippi. Over the past ten years, 1976-86, the appropriations for the 8 state universities show

such flagrant disparities that not only divide along racial lines, but also beat logic. For instance, even though the credit hours and enrollment at Mississippi Valley State University, a predominantly black institution, are not significantly different from those of Mississippi University for Women, a predominantly white institution, the latter receives higher appropriations than the former (Valley). Though this case may be unique to Mississippi, but one wonders if anything with racial undertones could be unique to any one state in the Deep South.

Another reason why the black teacher is gradually becoming extinct lies in the changing patterns of college enrollment and career options. According to available statistics, in 1982, for instance, blacks constituted 15% of high school students in the United States, but only 11% of the high school graduates. A more serious problem, however, is that a lower percentage of blacks in high school are in the academic track. In 1980, for example, 32% of blacks, compared with 42% of whites were in the academic track. The figures become even more disturbing at the college level.

According to the Bureau of Census, in 1976, 33.5% of black high school graduates between the ages of 18-24 were enrolled in college. This figure compared favorably with white enrollment. By 1983, however, only 27% of black high school graduates in the same age bracket (18-24) were enrolled in college. The percentages of blacks in higher education institutions have steadily dropped since the mid-seventies: blacks made up 9.4% in 1976, 9.2% in 1980, and 8.8% in 1984 (Thomas,1986). When we consider four-year institutions only, blacks constituted 8.5% of

the enrollment in 1976, but by 1984 this figure had dropped to 8.0%. It is noted, on the other hand, that a whopping 42% of black high school graduates attended 2-year colleges in 1980, even though these colleges do not offer bachelor's degrees (Hill,1983). Among those entering 4-year colleges, fewer are opting for careers in teaching. According to Baratz (1986), the top black students (as identified by SAT scores) who enter college are interested in four major areas of concentration : engineering (36%), health/medicine (15%), computer science (12%) and social science (11%). Less than 1% of this group are inclined toward education. The following percentages of black teachers in the public schools cogently demonstrate the argument. According to the **Digest of Education Statistics**, in 1971, 8.1% of public school teachers were black; 1976, 8.0%; 1981, 7.8%; 1985, 6.9%.

The point of the presentation so far, is to demonstrate and emphasize the fact that the percentage of black high school students entering college is getting smaller and, besides, their career options do not include teaching. Consequently, the pool of black teachers is drying up. However, since it has been the traditional role of the historically black institutions to train a large percentage of these teachers, these institutions need to develop new strategies for dealing with the situation before it gets out of hand.

Strategies for Improvement

A number of strategies can be effectively used as a means for improving the education programs and the rate of retention in

these programs at the predominantly black institutions as well as for increasing the overall enrollment of black high school graduates in four-year colleges and universities. These strategies include articulation with area public scchools and junior colleges, improving faculty instruction through professional development, and the development of test-wiseness skills in black students at both the collegiate and precollegiate levels.

Based on the earlier statistics cited, it is evident that we are losing a great number of black students at the high school level. It is also clear from those figures that a great many black high school graduates are entering 2-year colleges instead of 4-year colleges and universities. These factors make it imperative that these prdominantly black institutions develop an effective articulation system with the high schools and community/junior colleges in their geographic area. The idea of articulation advocated here is inherent in John Goodlad's concept of National Network for Educational Renewal which is a coalition of partnership between 17 universities and 100 school districts in various parts of the country and which was implemented in the Spring of 1986. Articulation calls for a sharing of ideas and the opening of communication channels between the institutions concerned. The implementation of articulation may take different forms. One form is to allow qualifed graduating seniors to take some college/university courses for credit. The credit hours thus earned are applied to the students' future college programs. Another variation of articulation is the adopt a school

philosophy whereby the schools and the colleges/universities exchange personnel. University or college professors/counsellors may teach or work at the schools so many times a month as part of their regular work load. The school teacher or school psychologist may also be allowed to do some work at the university for the professor or counsellor. What is involved here is a concept of sharing which leads to growth on both sides. While the college/university professor gains some insight into the realities of the public school classroom, the public school teacher or psychologist gets to understand college/universiity operations better and how he/she can help prepare better college students. Articulation at the precollegiate level, thus, establishes a form of symbiotic relationship for the mutual benefit of the two systems, with each of the two parties getting to understand better and fuller what goes on in the other's territory. In addition, for the colleges/universities and their personnel, however, articulation becomes a ploy for recruitment. The relationships that develop between the professors, the students and the public schools can translate into increased enrollments for the colleges /universities in question. Such a strategy may also be justified by trends noted by Phi Delta Kappa and the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University in a 1986 study which found that 22.0% of high school graduates favor teaching compared with the 6.2% of entry freshmen as indicated in the Carnegie report (Clark,1987).

With regard to articulation at the Junior college level, we could influence and redirect some of the large proportion of black students who end up there to re-enter 4-year institutions,

especially, the historically black colleges and universities to complete a four-year degree program. Through consultations, the colleges and universities can make it easier for junior college graduates to transfer to the senior colleges by ensuring that courses for majors are both transferable and relevant. Even the senior colleges and the junior colleges can establish joint curricula which will allow the latter to offer specific courses for the former.

In order to attract students to and retain them in the education programs, colleges, schools and departments of education are obligated to ensure that their students get certified to teach after graduation. This implies that such students should be adequately prepared to pass all tests required for teacher certification. The first step toward meeting this obligation is for these institutions to take a critical look at their faculty and the way they teach. It has become apparent to the writer and some of his colleagues at Mississippi Valley State University that there seems to be a clear disparity between the way faculty members teach at this institution (and this may not be unique to us) and what these standardized exams test for. Careful observations indicate that most faculty members tend to emphasize the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (knowledge & comprehension) whereas the external standardized tests emphasize the upper levels of the taxonomy (analysis, application, synthesis & evaluation). Consequently, a number of students do not fare well on these tests. An ancillary question that arises is whether black students in predominantly white institutions or

who are taught by whites do any better on these tests. The fact that blacks on the whole do not do well on these tests, nationally, is an indication that the cause may go deeper and beyond the classroom teacher to the home and our child rearing practices which may tend to "de-emphasize" analysis, application and evaluation. Whatever the ultimate cause may be, correcting the way our faculty teach is one way to deal with the poor performance of black students on standardized tests. To deal with the faculty teaching problem, these institutions must institute some kind of professional development programs for faculty to help move their teaching from the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy to the upper levels.

The other component of the total package for improving the performance of blacks on standardized tests so they can both get into and out of colleges of education is to improve their test-taking skills. Since testing has become an inseparable part of our educational scene and culture, it is imperative that black educators do something about this problem beyond talking. Sheer rhetoric about test biases, and even the development of alternative tests like the Dove's Counterbalance Intelligence Test cannot get black students over the test hurdle. On the other hand, teaching them to be test-wise can.

There are indications that test sophistication improves performance on standardize tests. Test-wiseness is not the same as teaching to the test or teaching material to be covered by the test. Test-wiseness, as Millman (1965) points out, "is a subject's capacity to utilize the characteristics and formats of

the test and/or the test-taking situation to receive high scores". Furthermore, test-wiseness does not depend on the testee's knowledge of the subject matter being tested.

Strategies for teaching test-wiseness include use of time, avoidance of errors, use of educated guesses, deductive reasoning, and the ability to utilize cues from the stems of test questions. Such training, it has been indicated, can aid the examinee to maximize "scores regardless of question format" (Sarnacki, 1979). Pell and Pell (1986) also point out that "whether the est is teacher-made or standardized, the particular subject matter being tested is not exempt from being influenced by test-wiseness". On the other hand, Urman (1983) notes that "a lack of test-wiseness can penalize certain students". Test-wiseness is therefore an attempt to equalize opportunities for passing standardized tests so that students are not differentially rewarded or penalized by the characteristics of a test. In this regard therefore, teaching test-wiseness becomes an obligation and a necessity for the predominantly black colleges and universities. However, the success of this approach on a more permanent basis lies in going beyond the college or university campus to the precollegiate student in the elementary school and tackling the problem at its grass roots, utilizing the articulation process discussed earlier on. These strategies can help black colleges and universities increase their enrollments in Teacher Education programs as well as retain these students in such programs with a spill over in overall increases in enrollment and retention for the institutions as a whole.

However, the Consortium for Excellence in Teacher Education

(1987) reminds us that :

> Excellence in Teacher Education will not be attained by wholesale prescriptions for reform which ignore the diversity of the institution that educate teachers or of individuals who want to become educators.

Consequently, the predominantly black colleges and universities must study their own educational illness and develop their own unique cures and effective prescriptions. None-the-less, the writer is conviced that the strategies discussed can make a difference.

Conclusion

This paper, using available statistics, has sought to emphasize the declining number of black teachers in our public school system, even though the enrollment is becoming predominantly black. The paper places the responsibility of arresting this downward trend on the predominantly black colleges and universities, and suggests three strategies to deal with the problem. These strategies include improving faculty teaching methods through professional development programs, teaching students to be test-wise, and establishing coalitions of partnerships with area schools and junior colleges.

REFERENCES

Baratz, Joan C. **"Black Participation in the Teacher Pool"**.Paper prepared for the Carnegie Forum's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, January 1986, p.1.

Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports, **School Enrollment - Social and Economic Characteristics of Students**, (Washington,D.C.:U.S. Department of Commerce), Series P-20, No. 404.

Clark, David L. **"High School Seniors React to their Teachers and their Schools"** (Phi Delta Kappan, March 1987), p.503.

Digest of Education Statistics 1983-84 (Washington,D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Press, p.51; 1980, p.42; 1977-78, p.42.

Graham, Patricia A. **"Black Teachers : A Drastically Scarce Resource"** (Phi Delta Kappan, April 1987), p.598-605.

Hill, Susan T. **The Traditionally Black Institutions of Higher Education 1980-82** (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1985), p.x, 64.

Millman, Jason et al. **"An Analysis of Test-Wiseness"** (Educational and Psychological Measurement, Autumn 1965), p. 710.

Olson, Lynn. **"Network for Renewal: Goodlad Seeks Stronger School-University Alliances"** (Education Week, March 18, 1987), p.1.

Prell, JoAnn M. and Paul A. **"Improving Test Scores - Teaching Test-wiseness: A Review of the Literature"** (Phi Delta Kappa Research Bulletin, Nov. 1986), p. 2.

Rodman, Blake"**In Texas, 96.7% Pas Educators' Test**" (Education Week, May 14, 1986), p. 1, 40.

Sarnacki, Randolph E. "**An Examination of Test-Wiseness in the Cognitive Domain**" (Review of Educational Research, Spring 1979), p. 263.

Thomas, Gail E. **Access and Success of Blacks and Hispanics in U.S. Graduate and Professional Education**. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986), p.4.

Urman, Harorld. "**The Effect of Test-Wiseness Training on the Achievement of Third and Fifth Grade Students**" (The Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, Montreal,Quebec, 1983), p. 7.

Wisniewski, Richard. "**The Ideal Professor of Education**" (Phi Delta Kappa, December 1986), p. 288-292.